

Title: The Continuum of Care: HIV Testing To Post-Delivery Care for HIV-Positive Women

Organization: Circle of Care (Family Planning Council), Philadelphia, PA

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Topical Issues of Focus: Successful collaborations between programs to prevent perinatal HIV, using CDC funding to build on existing HIV programs

Background/Objectives

As the incidence of HIV infection has increased among women of child-bearing age in Philadelphia, there has been a need to assure that women were made aware of their HIV status as early in the pregnancy as possible, and, if they were HIV positive, to educate them to the availability of treatment measure to reduce perinatal HIV transmission.

The goals of the Circle of Care Perinatal Transmission Prevention Program include:

1. Increasing the HIV testing and perinatal HIV Prevention Education in community settings
2. Assuring HIV testing of all pregnant women attending the prenatal clinics of the major medical centers in the city
3. Peer counselor support and case management
4. Instituting rapid testing for women of unknown HIV status at delivery in a medical center serving a significant population of unregistered pregnant women

Methods

Circle of Care expanded its existing continuum of care for HIV affected families by utilizing CDC funds in a social marketing campaign to educate specific areas of the city most affected by HIV on the benefits of HIV testing. Included in this campaign was a media program, training in collaboration with the PA/Mid-Atlantic AIDS ETC for OB/Gyn and other women's health providers on HIV and pregnancy, establishing an expert panel of obstetricians, gynecologists, perinatologists, HIV nurse practitioners, and an ethicist to conduct case reviews for trends in transmission. Funding under Title IV provides perinatal case management and peer counselors, as well as linkages to post partum primary HIV care and services. The family program of the Circle of Care provides ongoing care and support for the affected families in a "one stop" model in two pediatric care centers, and continuing case management and other support services through a consortium of providers.

Results

Services have been expanded to include more education within community-based organizations and sites, with emphasis on the importance of knowing your HIV status for the health of both you and your child. Expanded HIV counseling and testing services have been placed in community based organizations so that women can be made aware of their HIV status earlier. Women with an HIV positive diagnosis are

referred into the consortium of providers for coordinated HIV and prenatal care services. Intensive case management is offered to each consumer within the program, and the number of women receiving these services has increased over a three-year period. Peer counselors provide both education and social support at each consumer interaction, and offer additional incentives through consumer baby showers. HIV positive people are referred into family programs where physicians, nurse practitioners, social workers, and other peer counselors meet their medical and psychosocial needs. Family planning and reproductive health services are included in the continuum of services provided by the health network.

Conclusion

The concept of a continuum of care for HIV positive pregnant women has been extremely successful. Women are able to access services easier, and are more likely to be adherent to medication regimens and other health requirements for HIV positive persons because of the support network of the program. Intensive case management with assistant case managers for in home support is an integral link in the maintenance of HIV care and prenatal services for these women. Peer counselors have been found to be extremely successful in the maintenance of both HIV care and prenatal services for HIV positive pregnant women.